

'Ripple' - An online intervention aiming to reduce alcohol use in middle-aged women: Results of a Randomised Controlled Trial

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Introduction and Aims: Middle-aged women's drinking has become an area of increasing concern in Australia. Based on a literature review and focus group interviews a digital intervention – 'Ripple' – was developed to assist women aged 40-65 in reducing their drinking. The intervention included goal setting, assessment and feedback and education modules.

Design and Methods: Alcohol use and readiness to change were assessed at baseline and at 10-week follow-up plus twice per week using Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA). 252 women recruited online were randomly assigned to a three-arm Randomised Control Trial (RCT) consisting of an intervention group (IG) and two control groups (CG), one with and one without EMA.

Results: At follow-up, women in the IG reported a significant reduction in the number of drinks consumed in the last week (-38% or 6.2 drinks) compared to baseline. This reduction was significantly different from the CG without EMA ($B = -2.119$, $SE = 1.021$, $p = 0.039$). Women in the IG also reported higher levels on the readiness to change measures and differences to the CG without EMA obtained marginal significance (10%-error level) for these measures.

Discussions and Conclusions: Despite recent increases, alcohol use among middle-aged women in Australia is an under-targeted area for health interventions. Women participating in Ripple reported significant reductions in their alcohol use and an increased willingness to change their drinking. Retesting the intervention's effectiveness with a larger sample and under circumstances less impacted by COVID-19 is suggested.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: This work was supported by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and the ACT Government Health Promotion Grants Program.